



(Left to right) Pvt. 1st Class David Romero, Spc. Travis K. Steele and Spc. George Meacham perform a rendition of "Margaritaville" during an MWR-sponsored talent competition here. Keeping busy by becoming involved in activities helps prevent depression, according to medical leaders here. Photo by Spc. Eric M. McKeeby

## Leaders work to prevent suicide

Story and photos by Spc. Eric M. McKeeby

On the same day "The Washington Post" printed accounts of alleged soldier suicide in Iraq, medical and ministerial leaders here held workshops to educate CJTF-HOA here about suicide prevention.

The classes, team-taught by Navy Cmdr. William M. Hall, executive officer and senior medical officer at the Expeditionary Medical Unit, and Navy Cmdr. John Lea, chaplain here, were held at the chapel throughout the week.

While the timing of the briefings may have seemed in synch with reports of alleged suicide from soldiers participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Hall said the classes were scheduled as a regular event. He said many of the personnel here have been replaced through deployment rotations since the last class was offered in December.

In the presentations, Hall said depression is the leading cause of suicide.

Depression, he said, is extremely common and affects more troops than some think.

At CJTF-HOA and other forward deployed locations, a leading cause of depression is a feeling of isolation, Hall said.

"You have youth with time on their hands in an isolated duty station and, possibly, in a new duty station or new unit," he said. "Add in new friends, new colleagues, new co-workers and simply being away from home, and that's loneliness."

Even though these feelings may be common in soldiers not deployed, Hall said they are especially worrisome in deployed environments because of easier access to weapons and ammunition.

Hall said the EMU here has treated fewer cases of depression than is typical for deployed locations.

"The reasons is that folks, for the most part, are engaged in their units," he said. "They're only here for a short period of time, and I think a lot of people

muster by until the end of the deployment."

Some troops also decline to seek medical assistance for their depression, Hall added.

"It's like al Qaeda—you know they're out there, you just don't see them," he said.

Prevention of depression while deployed is achieved by avoiding what Hall calls "the deadly B's," boredom and time to brew.

"That's one of the reasons Morale, Welfare and Recreation is here. We have a wonderful fitness center. There are things for people to do with their energy."

Army Staff Sgt. Darvin Graham, senior mechanic at 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Infantry

Regiment, "The Old Guard," Bravo Co., said in his three deployments, keeping busy has been the key to avoid depression.

"It didn't feel good leaving my family," he said. "The mission kept me busy so I didn't have a lot of time to think about it. As time went by, the days turned into weeks, the weeks turned into months and, before I knew it, it was over."

Hall said he recommends exercise as a key way to avoiding depression. In addition to occupying time, he said physical training provides an endogenous release of opioids, or a "runner's high."

"Regular exercise makes a huge difference with depression," Hall said.

Quality connections to family and friends also improve mental health, he said.

While the number of troops seeking treatment for depression here may be lower than other deployed locations, Hall said troops should take their mental health seriously.

"If anyone wants to discuss a problem or knows someone who does, the chaplain, their chain of command and the EMU are here for them."

## Inspector General

Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa now has an Inspector General. Navy Lt. Larry Grossman, comes from the Office of the Naval Inspector General in Washington, D.C., and will be the Inspector General for all branches of service. He is located in Building 102, on the corner facing Building 100.

Several "IG Amnesty" boxes have been placed around the base for your complaints or issues that you may want to address, and please have as much detail as possible. An IG "Hotline" will be established soon. Remember, all information and identities passed to the IG via any of the venues listed above will be held in the strictest confidence. As always, you can remain anonymous if you choose; however, to clarify issues or to follow up on needed information, a case may become "unsubstantiated" due to lack of information, witnesses, etc.

Listed below are some examples of appropriate IG complaints but not limited to:

- Fraud
- Waste
- Abuse of Government Property
- Abuse of Title and Position
- Morale
- Command Assessments and Climate
- Mismanagement
- Standards of Conduct Violations
- Equal Opportunity
- Sexual Harassment

The IG is the right venue for an inquiry into a complaint that has been addressed using the appropriate process and the complainant can provide evidence that:

• The matter was not addressed fairly and impartially;

• The process was flawed, i.e., an error was made or essential material facts were omitted that substantially affected the outcome of the decisions.

If practical, please use the chain of command first.

To contact the IG call, 824-3204 or cell at 839-908, or email atgrossmanlb@hoa.centcom.mil.

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provided insight on family members who are no longer living.

"I told him about his grandfather, who was involved in my life," said the chief, who serves as the maintenance chief for VR-52—a fixed-wing logistics squadron here supporting Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa. "I remember him vividly."

The other Holloman, who serves as the network administrator for the Joint Special Operations Task Force, said he was appreciative to gain insight on his mother's father—a man he never knew.

Chief Holloman will soon return to Willow Grove, Penn., where his unit is based. While here, his unit has supported Brig. Gen. Mastin M. Robeson, commander for CJTF-HOA, in numerous flight missions.

Spc. Holloman expects his stint in Djibouti to continue until sometime in April before returning to Fort Gordon, Ga. However until his return stateside he will be looking forward to the Holloman family reunion.